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INFO RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 7555
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 9004
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ MAY LIMA 5072
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA 0322
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 5692
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL 3968
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
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SUBJECT: MANCUSO ALLEGES PARAMILITARY TIES TO POLITICIANS,
RETIRED GENERALS, AND BUSINESSES

REF: A. 98 STATE 67029

[1](#)B. 99 STATE 130281

[1](#)C. BOGOTA 449

Summary

[1](#)1. (U) Former paramilitary leader Salvatore Mancuso claimed in his May 15-16 voluntary testimony that retired generals, top government officials (including the vice-president and defense minister), members of congress, local government representatives, and companies had collaborated with paramilitaries. Mancuso claimed these ties were "irrefutable proof" that the paramilitary movement enjoyed official backing and sponsorship. President Uribe reiterated his commitment to exposing the truth about paramilitary crimes, and voiced confidence in Vice-President Francisco Santos and Defense Minister Juan Manuel Santos. End summary.

Naming Names

[1](#)2. (SBU) Ex-paramilitary leader Salvatore Mancuso resumed on May 15 in Medellin the third round of his voluntary confession or "version libre," which was suspended in January. He implicated three retired military generals--Ivan Ramirez, Martin Orlando Carreno, and Rito Alejo del Rio--in paramilitary activities. (NOTE: We revoked the visas of Ivan Ramirez and Rito Alejo del Rio in 1998 and 1999 respectively, Ramirez for terrorism ties and del Rio for terrorism and narcotrafficking concerns. Upon taking office, former President Pastrana removed Ramirez and del Rio from duty in 1998--ref A and B.) He also identified former National Police Director and current Ambassador to Austria Rosso Jose Serrano as the person who intervened to release him and ex-para leader Rodrigo Tovar (Jorge 40) from prison in Guajira. Carreno and Serrano publicly denied Mancuso's claims.

[1](#)3. (U) Mancuso said Vice President Francisco Santos and Defense Minister Juan Manuel Santos had both met with him and other paramilitary leaders on more than one occasion in the

1990s. During this time, the vice president was a columnist for the Santos family-owned El Tiempo newspaper and the defense minister was a private citizen. Mancuso claimed Francisco Santos supported the creation of a paramilitary bloc that operated in Bogota, and claimed Juan Manuel Santos backed a plot to overthrow then-President Ernesto Samper in 1996-97. He did not provide evidence to support either of these allegations. In addition, Mancuso said President Uribe's cousin Mario and former congresswoman Eleonora Pineda had entered into an electoral pact with him. On May 16, Mario Uribe publicly denied making any deals with Mancuso.

14. (U) Defense Minister Santos said late on May 15 he met the paramilitaries and guerrillas in 1997 in an effort to broker peace. He acknowledged he met twice with former paramilitary leader Carlos Castano, but said he had also met with the FARC and ELN, all in the company of intermediary Alvaro Leyva. The Defense Minister said, "If this is the 'truth' Mancuso wants to reveal, then people are going to be disappointed." In a radio interview on May 16, President Uribe said, "We want to get at the truth...but it must be put into proper context." He voiced full confidence in Vice President Santos and Defense Minister Santos and recognized they both had long acknowledged past meetings with the paramilitaries.

AUC Electoral Activities

15. (U) On May 16, Mancuso said he was personally responsible for the election of 25 of 28 municipal mayors in the

department of Cordoba, and claimed other paramilitary leaders were responsible for securing the election of mayors and congressmen in other departments such as Sucre. He revealed he had backed seven members of Congress: Julio Manzur, Zulema Jattin, Miguel de la Espriella, Reginaldo Montes, Libardo Lopez, Muriel Benito, and Eleonora Pineda. Mancuso asserted that no politician was forced to attend the 2001 meeting in Santa Fe de Ralito that has led to the arrest of 16 former and current officeholders. Mancuso again claimed that the AUC helped elect 35 percent of the Congress were elected in 2002 (ref A). Several of the arrested officeholders said on May 17 that Mancuso was not telling the truth and has failed to reveal the extent of his criminal activities.

Ties with Local and Foreign Firms

16. (U) On May 17, Mancuso addressed paramilitary finances, personal assets, and narcotrafficking. He provided details about alleged ties between the paramilitaries and companies, such as Bavaria, Postobon, and some multinational firms. Among the multinational organizations that Mancuso said made regular payments to the paramilitaries were Chiquita, Dole, Del Monte, and Hyundai. He claimed the latter donated four vehicles per year to the AUC. The Colombian and multinational firms implicated by Mancuso denied his allegations. On personal assets, he claimed to have turned over 25 million USD in property titles. In terms of narcotrafficking, he said he "managed it all."

Next Steps of Version Libre

17. (U) Mancuso is expected to answer specific questions about the incidents/crimes he already confessed to when he resumes his testimony; the new date has not yet been set. In his previous testimony in January, Mancuso described 93 operations in which he personally killed or ordered killed 375 people from the early 1990s to 2004 (ref C). He also discussed paramilitary infiltration of government institutions and interference in local and national elections, and handed over the July 2001 "Ralito Agreement" signed by paramilitary leaders and some 30 political figures.

